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NO # 1236-76

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

Executive Registry

76-8737

30 JUL 1976

The Honorable Brent Scowcroft  
Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs  
First Floor, West Wing  
The White House

Dear Brent:

This is to bring you up-to-date on the experiment in competitive analysis in relation to this year's NIE on Soviet strategic forces and programs, which is being undertaken in response to a recommendation by the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

As you will recall, the PFIAB suggested that three topics for study be selected from among some of the important issues of the estimate, such as ICBM accuracy, low altitude air defense, ASW capability, and strategic objectives and policies. My representatives met with Dr. Molander of your staff and Commander Olmer of the PFIAB Secretariat to consider and select the three topics for study. At that meeting it was agreed that ICBM accuracy and low altitude air defense were appropriate, but that there were insuperable data problems associated with a "B" team study of ASW capability in the short time available. The remaining subject strategic policies and objectives, presented only minor problems, although Dr. Molander did not see that this subject would be particularly useful. The Intelligence Evaluation Committee of PFIAB, however, strongly endorsed the study of these three topics, and were willing to forego ASW as a subject of study for this initial effort.

Since that time we have been able to establish the "B" teams for ICBM accuracy and for low altitude air defense, and those teams are now in operation. Greater difficulty has been encountered on the subject of Soviet strategic objectives, principally because the leading candidates to head these teams found it impossible--for both personal and professional reasons--to accept the task on such short notice. Recently, however, one of the PFIAB nominees--Dr. Richard S. Pipes of Harvard--has returned from Europe and has indicated a willingness to accept that charge.

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There is still some security processing of Dr. Pipes to be done, but it now appears that the "B" Team can probably begin work during the second week of August, giving them approximately seven weeks to complete the task. Other potential members of the team have indicated a willingness to put in one or two days a week in support of Dr. Pipes. These include, among others, Albert Wohlstetter, Thomas Wolfe, Gardiner Tucker, Eugene Rostow, Ambassador Foy Kohler, and General John Vogt (ret.).

The three topics selected span a range of methodological and substantive issues. In the first two, for example, the data bearing on the problem are relatively direct and technical. On one of the topics--ICBM accuracy--  
 are the critical areas of analysis. The low altitude air defense problem--while also technical--involves complex force analyses with many interlocking aspects of the data and methodologies. The third issue--strategic policy and objectives--calls for the interpretation of  evidence on the interaction among political and bureaucratic issues, force perceptions, and military planning. I believe--and\*you agree--that this range and mix of topics are particularly well suited for this experiment to test the utility of competitiveness in national estimating. On this basis I am preparing to move ahead on all three studies.

Sincerely,

/s/ George Bush

George Bush

\*I hope (correction on original made by Molander, NSC Staff)

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